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THE VOICE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 15, 2010

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 93% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM opposes Raised House Bill 5489 "*An Act Concerning Secondary School Reform*".

Among other things, this bill would mandate that certain minimum requirements for graduation be implemented. While the bill includes a mandate to the Department of Education to seek federal funds to assist with implementing these new requirements, there is no guarantee that such funds will be available.

Without guaranteed state or federal funding, this bill would be yet another unfunded mandate placed on local governments – and a potentially enormous one.

While this proposal may be laudable in purpose, towns and cities have recently suffered a \$100 million cut in state aid in this biennium; the State is currently grappling with a \$500-\$700 million current year deficit; and, upwards of \$3 billion deficits faces us in the out years. In addition, as local costs rise *ECS is expected to be "level-funded" with FY 08-09, and only due to federal ARRA funding.*

Let's be clear – only because of \$271 million in federal funds with the FY 10-11 ECS grant be level-funded with FY 08-09. In FY 11-12 that federal money will be gone and the State's contribution to ECS will have to rise by the same \$271 million just to stay level with three years before. The State has never increased ECS by that much in a single year, and projections of a major State budget gap that year makes it unlikely to do so.

All the while local costs go up.

In this context, adding huge new education-related mandates would hurt education, overall. It would require other programs to be cut.

The State should not consider any new unfunded or under-funded education mandate unless and until it lives up to its present commitments...and it is difficult to see when this will occur.

CCM urges the committee to take no action on this bill.

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If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, Senior Legislative Associate of CCM via email kweaver@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 498-3026.